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**HCV E2 PROTEIN BINDING AGENTS FOR  
TREATMENT OF HEPATITIS C VIRUS INFECTION**

**Abstract of the Disclosure**

5 The present invention provides a method of treating or  
preventing hepatitis C virus infection in a subject which  
comprises administering an effective amount of an agent to  
the subject, wherein the agent is capable of inhibiting  
the attachment of hepatitis C virus onto cells by  
10 specifically binding to the hepatitis C virus envelope E2  
protein so as to treat or prevent hepatitis C virus  
infection. The present invention also provides a method  
of identifying a compound which can inhibit the attachment  
of hepatitis C virus onto cells and can treat or prevent  
15 hepatitis C virus infection in a subject by inhibiting the  
binding of hepatitis C virus envelope E2 protein to a  
cellular protein associated with hepatitis C virus  
attachment onto cells and their entry into cells,  
comprising (a) incubating said compound, the hepatitis C  
20 virus envelope E2 protein or its variant and said cellular  
protein capable of specifically binding to said hepatitis  
C virus E2 protein under a suitable reaction conditions,  
(b) determining the interactions between the hepatitis C  
virus envelope E2 protein or its variant and said cellular  
25 protein in the presence of said compound, and (c)  
comparing the interactions in step (b) with the  
interaction between the hepatitis C virus envelope E2  
protein or its variant and said cellular protein in the  
absence of said compound so as to identify a compound  
30 which can inhibit the attachment of hepatitis C virus into  
a cell.

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